DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 111 375 IR 002 429

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TITLE	[Problems Inherent in Attempting Standardization of Libraries.]
INSTITUTION	California State Univ. and Colleges, Los Angeles. Office of the Chancellor.
PUB DATE	3 Jul 75
NOTE	7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Library Association (94th, San Francisco, California, June 29-July 5, 1975)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS	College Libraries; Equipment Evaluation; Equipment Manufacturers; *Equipment Standards; Higher Education; Library Equipment; *Library Networks; *Library Standards; Microform Reader Printers; *Multicampus Districts; Speeches; *University Libraries
IDENTIFIERS	ALA 75; *California State University and Colleges

ABSTRACT

In setting standards for a large and geographically dispersed library system, one must reconcile the many varying practices that affect what is being measured or discussed. The California State University and Colleges (CSUC) consists of 19 very distinct campuses. The problems and solutions of one type of CSUC library are not likely to be those of all CSUC libraries. For example a 1974 survey of microform equipment on all the campuses showed widely different experiences with the same brand of equipment. If one looks at the interval from the time a standard is first suggested until it is approved, one finds that it usually goes through several revisions. For example, in 1969, representatives of the recording industry suggested that there be a uniform coding system for all products of the music industry; but today, in 1975, the standards have still not been totally accepted. The process of developing standards is necessarily one of compromise; so perhaps the most tangible way librarians can influence the evolution of standards is simply to meet to decide what their needs are, examine what solutions are available, and get whatever consensus is possible. (Author/SL)

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ALA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

RTSD-RIMS Program Meeting

July 3, 1975

Francis Spreitzer asked me to speak about the problems inherent in attempts at standardization within relatively large and geographically dispersed systems, how standards evolve, and how librarians can influence them. The subject of standards is something that I think about frequently, because I have contact with nineteen very distinctive campuses. Also, because I work in the Chancellor's Office rather than on one of the campuses, I often must consider the many varying practices, both in the library itself and on each campus, that affect any library matter that is being measured or discussed on a systemwide basis.

The California State University and Colleges, taken as a whole, includes some 287,000 students and 16,000 faculty. It offers bachelor's and master's degrees in about 250 different subject areas. The enrollment ranges from 2,000 students at the smallest campus, to 30,000 students at the largest. The oldest campus, San Jose State University, was founded in 1857. The newest campus, California State College, Bakersfield, began instruction in 1970.

The CSUC libraries last year added about 500,000 volumes to their collections, bringing them systemwide to about 7.3 million volumes. The total size of CSUC and the range of characteristics

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of the 19 institutions that I've just mentioned are a clue to some of the problems involved in standardization.

The problems and solutions of one type of CSUC library are very likely not to be those of all CSUC libraries. However, they are budgeted as a group rather than individually, so, to some extent, they are constrained to consider what is to be done for their common good as a system rather than for just themselves alone.

During Spring, 1974, the CSUC Microfilm Committee and I met with Don Avedon, Technical Director of NMA and Dr. Carl Nelson, past president of NMA. They discussed the 1973 version of the document, Criteria for the Procurement and Use of Microform and Related Equipment by the Libraries of The California State University and Colleges, and suggested specific revisions which were incorporated into the August 9, 1974 version. About the same time a survey was conducted to list the microform reader/printer equipment and its condition. The areas covered were screen size, magnification ratios, present condition of the equipment, ease of maintenance, location of equipment, its approximate age, whether a maintenance contract with the manufacturer is presently in force, and, if so, what their experience with it has been.

The responses were intriguing in that in some cases a particular model was praised by some libraries and panned by others. Some campuses seemed to have difficulty in maintaining equipment that

proved to be no problem for others. Also, the responses did not aligh themselves at all according to age of equipment or whether there was a service contract with the manufacturer. In fact, one campus that has its own technician doing all maintenance was among the most satisfied, and one manufacturer apparently supplies very good service to some very old equipment.

A compilation of the responses was sent to each of the CSUC libraries and each manufacturer was sent a copy of the comments made about his equipment. One manufacturer asked for a list of the CSUC campuses that commented on his equipment so that he could correct the problems they were having.

A modest beginning, but there is a continuing need to make manufacturers aware of library problems and, if possible, make it economically advantageous to them to design well and provide durable, easily maintained equipment.

If you look at the interval from when a standard is first suggested to when it is approved, it is clear that it usually goes through several revisions. For example, representatives of the recording industry suggested that there be a uniform coding system for all products of the music industry to facilitate product handling both physically and administratively. This was suggested in 1969 at the first International Music Industry Conference. There was strong support and an international group was formed to study the practicality of developing such a scheme. This group presented

a preliminary report at the next year's conference in which a numbering system was proposed; then they disbanded, and a working group, the Music Industry Code Specifications Committee, was formed. This group included representatives from all parts of the industry: manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, publishers, and librarians.

Also in 1970, subcommittee 31 on the Music Industry Code was established by Committee Z39 of the American National Standards Institute. That subcommittee prepared a proposed draft standard code which subsequently was circulated to all national committees of the International Standards Organization. In 1971 the proposal received official status and was accepted as falling within the scope of Working Group 1 of that Committee.

Since 1971 the proposed numbering system has been successfully used as the warehouse organization and catalog order number by a company that provides special order service to records and tapes to retailers and wholesalers.

From that chronology, you might assume that now, four years later, this particular standard is well on its way to being established or perhaps already has been established. Not so. Apparently the recording industry is filled with many small companies and, one of the major backers of this standard, Billboard Publications, Inc., withdrew its support when it realized that the proposed central agency to coordinate the assignment of unique codes had no

authority to enforce the standard. In particular, the proposed numbering system would have no impact on obtaining copyright on recordings. So what incentive would the small independents have to conform to the standard numbering system?

The process of developing standards is necessarily one of compromise. Occasionally, the standard that results is something already in use exactly as proposed, but often adoption of a standard requires most participants to discard parts of their existing system or at least to modify their procedures.

So, perhaps the most tangible way librarians can influence the evolution of standards is simply to get together to decide what their needs are, examine what solutions are available, get whatever consensus they can on what they, as a group, see as preferred solutions, then, together with equipment manufacturers and suppliers, we may come to a mutually beneficial conclusion. But when many people with a variety of interests are involved in this process, it is not at all assured that a standard will come about. However, unless librarians make their needs known, it's not likely that whatever national and international standards evolve will suit particular library needs. NMA is specifically a standards organization and librarians participate in NMA's development of standards that are submitted to the American National Standards Institute. But as an additional avenue, it might be useful for ALA members who are interested in promoting microfilm standards to establish a procedure among themselves to initiate and react to

proposals for microfilm standards. In fact, in the June, 1974 Journal of Library Automation, TESLA, the Committee on Technical Standards for Library Automation, set up such a procedure for reviewing library automation standards. That procedure for obtaining participation in the standards process at the ALA membership level could be used by this group for examining microform matters of interest to librarians.

In addition, although the CSUC Microform Criteria are not standards themselves, they do point out areas of concern to librarians. I'm sure the CSUC Microfilm Committee would be glad to work with any librarians who are interested in extending and refining the Criteria for use outside of CSUC.

The process of getting standards is admittedly slow and the results are uncertain, but these are some ways that librarians can influence them.